

Myrtle Grove
Goldsborough Neck Road
Easton
Talbot County
Maryland

HABS No. MD-336

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MD,
21-EATO,
10-

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20240

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Location: Goldsborough Neck Road
Easton, Talbot County, Maryland

Present Owner
and Occupant: Mr. and Mrs. John Donoho

Present Use: Residence

Date of Easement: December 13, 1975

Statement of
Significance: Myrtle Grove has remained in the Goldsborough family since its construction in 1734. The house, situated on Goldsborough Creek, consists of two main sections. The oldest frame portion with low sloping roof was erected in 1734. An elegant brick addition made in 1790 reflects the more sophisticated, Federal style.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: Myrtle Grove consists of a frame section which dates from 1734, a brick section constructed in 1790, and a frame wing added in 1927.
2. Architect: None known.
3. Original and subsequent owners: Myrtle Grove is owned by the same family for whom it was constructed in 1734. Nicholas Goldsborough, progenitor of this Maryland family, came to the Chesapeake with his wife, Margaret Howes, in 1669-1670. They settled on Kent Island where their three children, Nicholas, Robert, and Judith later joined them. Mr. Goldsborough soon died, and his wife remarried.

The Goldsborough's son Robert came to Maryland in 1678 at the age of eighteen. He and Nicholas, his brother, both settled in Talbot County; Nicholas near Oxford and Robert at an estate called Ashby on the St. Michaels or Miles River.

Myrtle Grove was built for Robert Goldsborough II, oldest son of Robert and Elizabeth Goldsborough. Erected circa 1734, it stands on part of Ashby. When Goldsborough died in 1777, Myrtle Grove was left to his wife with the provision that it pass to Robert Goldsborough III after her death. In 1790, Robert Goldsborough III had a brick addition made to the earlier frame portion of Myrtle Grove.

Robert Goldsborough III died in 1798 and left a will similar to

that of his father. His wife was to hold Myrtle Grove until her death, and at that time Myrtle Grove would transfer to their son, Robert Henry Goldsborough. After the death of Robert Henry Goldsborough in 1836, the chain of title to Myrtle Grove is unclear. Myrtle Grove remained within the family. "W. Goldsborough" was marked as owner on an 1858 map of Talbot County, and the "Heirs of R.H. Goldsborough" were listed as owners in an 1877 atlas of Talbot and Dorchester Counties.

Charles Goldsborough, the last owner bearing the family name, died in 1928. According to the Talbot County Tax Assessment of 1928, for the First District (Easton), the next owner was Robert Goldsborough Henry, the father of Mrs. John Donoho. Mrs. Donoho and her husband are the present owners of Myrtle Grove.

4. Original Plans, Construction, etc.: On the north bank of Goldsborough Creek, south of Goldsborough Neck Road, Myrtle Grove was constructed in 1734. The oldest section, now in the center, is five bays wide and one and one half stories high. A large brick exterior chimney has since been enclosed by a new addition. A tall inside end chimney on the southeast rises above the roofline of the brick wing built in 1790. The northeast elevation has a porch, supported by six posts, which extends across the entire first story.
5. Alterations and Additions: In 1790 a large brick wing was added to the southeast end of the original dwelling. Four bays wide by three bays deep, it has two stories, raised basement, and attic beneath a low-pitched gable roof.

A small clapboard law office was constructed for Robert Goldsborough III in 1970 near Myrtle Grove.

In 1927 Robert Goldsborough Henry added a one and one half story clapboard kitchen wing with gable roof.

6. Historical Events and Personages: Robert Goldsborough, son of Nicholas and Margaret Howes Goldsborough, studied law and was admitted to practice in Maryland in 1687. He held a number of public posts; his first major position was as Maryland Councillor at Law from 1696 to 1699. From 1698 until 1705, he was Justice of the Peace in Talbot County, and from 1705 to 1707 he was an Associate Justice of the Supreme Court. Mr. Goldsborough served as Chief Justice of the Court from 1719 to 1740. He married Elizabeth Greenberry of Anne Arundel County in 1697. They had twelve children, seven of whom lived to adulthood.

Myrtle Grove was built for Robert Goldsborough II, oldest son of Robert and Elizabeth Goldsborough. Erected about 1734, it stands on part of Ashby. One source states that the small frame house was given to Robert Goldsborough II by his father as a wedding gift, but this is not certain as he did not marry until 1739. Sarah

Nichols, his first wife, died within a week of the birth of their son, Robert III, in 1740. Goldsborough remarried in 1742 to Mrs. Mary Ann Turbutt Robins; they had three children. It was Robert Goldsborough II, lawyer and judge, who was a member of the Court of Justices of Talbot County during the Stamp Act crisis. He was present when the Court announced that it would "detect, abhor, and hold in the utmost contempt all and every person who shall meaningfully accept of any employment relating to the Stamp Act..." Myrtle Grove was left to Goldsborough's widow at his death in 1777 with the specific provision that it pass to his son, Robert III, at the time of her death.

A brick addition was constructed for Robert Goldsborough III in 1790. Charles Willson Peale painted a portrait of the Goldsborough family in the same year. Peale wrote in his diary that he stayed at Ashby in 1790 because Judge Goldsborough's house was not yet finished. A copy of the portrait, now owned by Robert McNeill of Philadelphia, hangs in the main hall at Myrtle Grove.

Born in 1779 at Myrtle Grove, Robert Henry Goldsborough was the son of Robert and Mary Emerson Trippe Goldsborough. He received a bachelor's degree from St. John's College in Annapolis in 1796. Although Goldsborough ran for political office, he preferred to farm his land rather than become a lawyer. He was elected to the House of Delegates in 1804, but lost subsequent elections during the first decade of the nineteenth century. Goldsborough was captain of a cavalry troop which fought at St. Michael's in 1813. Later he was appointed by Governor Levin Winder to take General Philip Reid's seat as United States senator, an office he held until 1819. In 1825, Goldsborough was elected to the Maryland House of Delegates. He also was a member of the Board of Public Works for the Eastern Shore in 1826. Goldsborough again served as a United States senator in 1835 when he was elected by the Maryland State Legislature to fill the unexpired term of Ezekial F. Chambers.

B. Sources of Information:

1. Secondary Sources:

a. Unpublished:

National Register of Historic Places, Nomination Form, August 3, 1974.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: The earliest part of Myrtle Grove reflects Maryland vernacular architecture in addition to a later, more sophisticated, Federal style.
2. Condition of fabric: Excellent.

B. Description of Exterior

1. Foundations: Foundations for the 1734 and 1790 sections of the house are brick laid in Flemish bond.
2. Wall construction: The oldest part of Myrtle Grove is five bays wide and one and one half stories tall. This central section of the house is covered with white German or drip board. The 1790 Flemish bond brick addition is three bays wide by three bays deep and has a molded brick water table on the southwest and northeast facades. The 1927 kitchen wing is covered with painted white clapboard.
3. Porches, stoops, Bulkheads: A long porch with low pitched gable roof, supported by six square posts, is located at the northeast facade. The door at the center bay is reached by four steps.

The 1790 brick wing has two entrances: at the northeast facade the door is reached by a straight flight of seven stone steps with curving wrought iron balustrade, at the southwest; the door has a straight flight of four wood steps and a landing with balustrade. The risers and balustrade are painted white, and the treads grey.

A bulkhead with rubbed and gauged brick lintel leads to the cellar of the main block and is situated at the facade adjoining the porch. The batten door retains its original iron strap hinges; the wood box lock has iron trim.

4. Chimneys: Myrtle Grove has four chimneys. The 1734 structure has a large exterior chimney at the northwest, now enclosed by the 1927 wing. A tall inside end chimney on the southeast rises above the roof of the brick wing. Two inside end chimneys are located at the southeast wall of the 1790 addition. These chimneys have a corbel course consisting of six bricks.

5. Openings:

- a. Doors and doorways: The 1734 portion of Myrtle Grove has a wide, ten panel wood door located at the central bay. A molded architrave and five light transom frame the door.

The northeast facade of the 1790 brick wing has a door located in the third bay from the southeast end. Fluted pilasters with full entablature support a triangular pediment with modillions and dentils. A blind delicate fan light surmounts a wide six panel wood door; bricks are visible behind the transom. Although the southwest facade doorway is treated in a similar manner, it is framed by two louvered shutters, presently painted dark green.

The 1927 frame addition has a door at the northwest facade leading directly to the kitchen.

- b. Windows and shutters: The older five bay section of Myrtle

Grove has four double hung sash windows with thick muntins in nine-over-nine lights at the northeast facade. Each window has three panel shutters. Two identical windows are placed at the southeast facade.

The brick three bay wing also has double hung sash windows with nine-over-nine lights. The first floor windows have white painted three panel shutters while second floor windows have louvered black shutters. A rubbed and gauged brick lintel is located above the first floor windows. The southeast facade has three windows on the second floor and only two at either end of the first floor. A large, elliptical window with delicate muntins is centered in the southeast and northwest gables. Cellar windows are covered with louvered wood panels.

The new wing has double hung sash windows with six-over-six lights on the first floor and two double hung sash windows with four-over-four lights at the end of the gable.

6. Dormers, cupolas, towers: The original 1734 portion of Myrtle Grove has three dormers with triangular projecting pediment heads. The roofs of the dormers are covered with wood shingles, and double hung sash six-over-six windows.

Prepared by Susan Stein
National Trust for Historic
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Edited by Eleni Silverman, HABS
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